



David Dadekian
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Testimony in support of H 8144

April 14, 2026

Honorable Chairperson Abney and the members of the House Committee on Finance:

I am the founder and president of Eat Drink RI, one of the top media and marketing companies in the region for all things culinary. As an advocate for our food system, a small business owner working with many small business farmers, and as a citizen concerned about our changing climate, **I strongly support H 8144, specifically adding \$2 million in funding to support farmland conservation as well an additional \$8 million to support open space land conservation and outdoor recreation grants.**

Farmland and open space land protection, preservation and conservation funding should be a priority for many reasons:

- The Rhode Island farm sector is a large part of the state economy providing close to 4,000 jobs and contributing \$500 million in direct revenue to the state.
- In a world of growing food insecurity due to many global factors, local farms provide Rhode Islanders with long-term food security. No matter what happens to the global food system, we can still grow food here for our community.
- State farmland conservation is a good investment—for every dollar spent locally, federal and philanthropic funding match it with \$1.70. Where else can you find a consistent 70% ROI?
- Local farms contribute to climate resilience goals by using farming practices such as cover crop planting & rotation, soil regenerative practices and integrated pest management.
- Farmers markets and agritourism have become a top component of our state's tourism industry and figure prominently in the tourism campaigns developed by Commerce RI.
- To date, state farmland protection investments have attracted over \$38 million in matching funds from the federal government.
- Over 1 million pounds of local farm produce has gone to RI hunger relief agencies since 2018.
- 35,000 Rhode Islanders per month are receiving fresh local produce from Rhode Island farms through emergency food sites.
- Without state farmland conservation funding, an estimate 8,000 acres of RI farmland will be lost to development by 2040.
- Local farms do not compete with housing needs. They are generally located away from areas where housing is most needed.
- Preserved farmland benefits farmers of all-ages—both owners of multi-generational farms looking to maintain their family business and new farmers looking to enter the field.

Thank you to Representative Cotter and her co-sponsors on H 8144. It was disheartening to once again see zero funding for farmland protection in the most recent Green Bond. Respectfully, I urge you to pass H 8144 forward to the full House for passage this session. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David S. Dadekian". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'D'.

David Dadekian